

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

June 26, 2013 | By [Katrina Lantos Swett](#)

Editor's note: Katrina Lantos Swett is the chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The views expressed are the writer's own.

The following op-ed appeared on [CNN World/GPS](#) on June 26, 2013.

Fifty years ago today, on June 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy stood in West Berlin and condemned the newly erected Berlin Wall. Twenty-four years later, President Ronald Reagan traveled to West Berlin and challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.”

In the decades between these speeches, human rights and religious freedom advocates behind the Iron Curtain defied the walls of tyranny by relying on the *samizdat*, a clandestine system to print and distribute government-suppressed material. Today, many use the internet in much the same way, raising both challenges and opportunities as the forces of repression and freedom clash in the virtual and physical worlds.

To read the entire op-ed please visit [CNN World/ GPS.](#)